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ABSTRACT

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Policymaker Partnership (PMP) of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education have joined together to consider challenges and opportunities for coordinating special and compensatory education among states, districts, and schools. As part of this effort toward increasing collaboration, CCSSO and PMP hosted 2 peer technical assistance matches as vehicles for raising awareness and understanding among key stakeholders in the year 2000. The success of these consultations led to sponsoring organizations hosting another similar event, a peer consultation in late 2001. This report summarizes the proceeding and key lessons from that peer consultation. The peer consultation included two components. In the first component, three states (Illinois, Louisiana, and Wyoming) not previously involved in the network met together to develop their vision of the elements of successful collaboration and barriers to collaboration. In the second component, five states (Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Utah, and Washington) that had previously been involved in peer consultations that focused on the collaboration joined the three new states. Results from the discussion groups

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indicate that professional development is a key vehicle for furthering collaboration. A second commonly heard theme was the importance of using multiple communication strategies to foster collaboration. This document includes the following sections: Introduction; Three State Consultation; Eight State Consultation; and Next Steps. A list of participants is appended. (CR)

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Shared Successes, Continuing Challenges

Fostering IDEA and Title I Collaboration
A Peer Consultation

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The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization of the public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Activity, and five extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. Through its structure of standing and special committees, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership and technical assistance on major educational issues.

Division of State Services and Technical Assistance

The Division of State Services and Technical Assistance supports state education agencies in developing standards-based systems that enable all children to succeed. Initiatives of the division support improved methods for collecting, analyzing and using information for decision-making; development of assessment resources; creation of high-quality professional preparation and development programs; emphasis on instruction suited for diverse learners; and the removal of barriers to academic success. The division combines existing activities in the former Resource Center on Educational Equity, State Education Assessment Center, and State Leadership Center.

Initiative to Improve Achievement in High Poverty Schools

The Initiative to Improve Achievement in High Poverty Schools, launched in the spring of 1995, focuses on building the capacity of state education agency officials and their local partners through effective implementation of ESEA, Title I, and other federal and state programs. The Initiative, whose goal is to ensure that students in high poverty schools gain the knowledge and skills necessary for sustained success, has come to encompass a wide set of activities and products to reach these objectives. These include national working conferences, special education and extended learning initiatives, the Limited English Proficient Students Assessment Project, State Support of Alternative and Community-Based High Schools, and the High School and Immigrant Students' Project.

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Introduction

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Policymaker Partnership (PMP) of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) have joined together in a partnership to consider challenges and opportunities for coordinating special and compensatory education among states, districts, and schools. Toward this end, CCSSO and PMP have established a dialogue with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and Office of Compensatory Education Programs (Title I) seeking greater guidance on behalf of state and local administrators on the parameters of special education and Title I collaboration available under the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). As part of this effort to move toward increasing collaboration, CCSSO and PMP hosted two peer technical assistance matches as vehicles for raising awareness and understanding among key stakeholders in 2000. Identifying opportunities and barriers to greater Title I and IDEA coordination were the underlying goals of each consultation.[1] The success of these consultations led the sponsoring organizations to host another similar event, a peer consultation in late 2001. This report summarizes the proceedings and key lessons from that peer consultation.

Purpose of the Peer Consultation

The third peer consultation on collaboration was held in Baltimore, Maryland, December 11 - 14, 2001. Five primary purposes formed the basis for this collaboration:

- To further advance collaboration between IDEA and Title I at state, district, and school levels to increase achievement for all students, especially students with special needs
- To create an opportunity for three new states to consider the advantages and opportunities of collaboration
- To share successes since the previous set of peer matches on collaboration
- To further explore peer-to-peer technical assistance as a strategy for states to share and learn from each other
- To consider strategies to continue networking among the nine states that have been involved in the peer matches and to spread the message of collaboration beyond these states

Context

This peer consultation included two components. In the first component, three states not previously involved in the network met together to:

- Develop their vision of the elements of successful collaboration
- Identify the benefits that can accrue from successful collaboration
- Consider how perceived barriers to collaboration can be overcome, and
- Learn from each other about successful collaborative practices

[1] A report on the proceedings and lessons from the year 2000 peer matches is available from the Council of Chief State School Officers website at http://www.ccsso.org/hps/hpspolicymaker.html

In the second component of the consultation, five states that had previously been involved in peer consultations focused on collaboration joined the three new states. During their time together, the returning states shared their successes and challenges with each other, with the three new states, and with federal representatives. Together the states explored new areas and opportunities. The synergy created by this combination brought power and meaning to the three days of discussions.

This consultation took place at a time of increasing emphasis on results, with the process seen as not an end in itself but rather as a means to achieve results. Accompanying this was a growing recognition that in order to achieve improved results for students with challenges, not only special education and compensatory education but also general education must be involved.

Federal representatives from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the Office of Compensatory Education Programs, and the Inspector General's Office of the U.S. Department of Education, and federally funded technical assistance providers also participated in this consultation.

Three State Consultation

The three new states – Louisiana, Illinois, and Wyoming – began their session by analyzing what successful collaboration would look like from their perspectives. They agreed that the hallmarks of successful collaborations between IDEA and Title I are:

- Strong parent education programs coupled with strong staff development programs that help teachers and para-professionals learn how to work with parents
- Agreement on common, child-focused results, and maintaining focus on such results
- Development of true understanding about both programs by all educators, especially Title I and special education staff
- Effective communication from staff to parents, administrators to staff, and state agencies to local districts and schools
- Use of common language while avoiding jargon
- Respect for others' opinions
- Willingness to be open-minded, listening to others without feeling threatened
- Respect for diversity
- Understanding by everyone that, with increasing emphasis on high-stakes accountability, the performance of each sub-group affects schools' and districts' accountability performance. It is important for all educators to understand their roles and that of their colleagues in the accountability system.
- Investing real meaning and commitment into the statement that "all children can learn"
- Effective staff development programs for teachers and para-professionals that create awareness about services, and
- Strong leaders willing to make tough decisions that foster collaboration

Discussion led to consensus that collaboration between Title I and special education has definite benefits for students and, in the current climate of accountability, for all school staff. There was further consensus, however, that collaboration may well pose threats to some educators and to some parents. These threats can best be overcome by using strategies that encompass the hallmarks of success listed above.

During the conference calls that preceded the peer consultation, some state team members had expressed uncertainty about the parameters of collaboration and how it might look in practice. Others expressed concern that they might try an approach and then face a program or fiscal audit . In order to address these issues, each state was asked to come to the match prepared to share examples of successful collaboration within their states. This sharing session proved to be a highlight of the day.

State Reports: Illinois, Louisiana and Wyoming

Illinois

The Illinois team described its State Flexible Service Delivery Pilot. The idea for this pilot program arose from the field, and models are developed locally. The pilot focuses on improving achievement for children who face challenges to learning. Schools that volunteer to become part of the pilot receive grants of

$10,000 for professional development and common planning time for intervention teams. To date, schools in 19 districts, including Chicago, have joined the program. These districts develop plans to increase learning for at-risk students. These plans range from addressing the needs of individual students to building-wide plans. The districts are allowed considerable flexibility in the use of state and federal funds. This was described by one Illinois team member as a "bucket rather than an egg carton" approach. It is important to note that the use of funding must support the intent of their authorizing legislation. General education teachers are involved in providing services and become more capable of providing in-class intervention. Medicaid funds are part of the funding mix in some districts. (It was noted that teachers were reluctant at first to do the paperwork required to bill Medicaid for their time, but they became more willing when districts promised 50 percent of Medicaid reimbursement would be available for classroom use.)

Illinois believes this to be a successful model. They identified six keys to success: (1) involving parents from the beginning so that they do not see this as an effort to reduce services; (2) recognizing that trust must be built; (3) including not only Title I and special education teachers but also general education teachers in providing interventions; (4) encouraging everyone to use the language of "our kids" rather than "your kids" or identifying children with labels; (5) using not only IDEA and Title I dollars but also other funds available to schools; and (6) creating a marketing plan that describes the purposes and safeguards built into this new approach. They also believe that collaboration such as this has a better chance of success in a school-wide Title I school. (Note: Later discussions in this peer consultation revealed much agreement with this belief, but also discussants made note of the fact that collaboration can work in schools that are designated as Title I targeted-assistance campuses.)

Louisiana

The Louisiana team reported several strategies that they believe have furthered collaboration. They reported that the state education agency was reorganized five years ago based upon function rather than funding stream. This re-organization strategy resulted in increased collaboration as people in the same office, paid by different funding streams, began to work and plan together.

The second strategy discussed by the Louisiana team was the School Analysis Model. The School Analysis Model is an intensive data collection and analysis approach that includes interviews with teachers, administrators and students; classroom observation; and subsequent cross-referencing of data. These data become part of the school improvement process and are used by cross-disciplinary District Assistance Teams. The cross-disciplinary teams assist districts with designing and providing professional development that enable schools to address gaps in academic achievement.

A third strategy utilized in Louisiana asks schools to allocate their school improvement resources by looking first at the needs of their students, using data to identify those needs. Schools then plan strategies designed to meet the identified needs. Only after these two steps have been completed do they decide how to use available funds to implement their strategies.

Louisiana also talked about the importance of communication, both within the department and with parents. The other states were particularly intrigued by Louisiana's use of tray liners in McDonald's restaurants to inform parents of the state's accountability system for schools. The tray liners give questions that may be used on statewide tests and provide examples of answers that would be rated as basic or proficient.

Wyoming

The Wyoming team described several strategies that fostered collaboration at the state level. The most important was its use of consolidated plans at both the state and district levels. At the district level, the process begins with the identification of district goals. All requests to the state must describe how the requested funds or action will lead to the accomplishment of the district goals. Some districts are allowed to use blended funds, although they must be able to show the money trail for the funds involved.

Wyoming also has a state consolidated plan with the U.S. Department of Education. The State Department of Education (SDE) has a Consolidated Grants Manager. Before grants to districts are approved, each SDE Program Manager must approve the grant. The Consolidated Grants Manager then notifies the district. Special education and programs included in district-level consolidated plans are monitored together.

The parent member of the Wyoming team commented that she believes that parent involvement has increased as a result of the strategy described above, and that organizations have seen the importance of working together rather than each pushing their separate agendas.

Promising Strategies Identified by Illinois, Louisiana and Wyoming

After hearing the descriptions of some of the strategies that states have undertaken, the group developed a consolidated list of strategies that can lead to successful collaboration. These included:

- Providing staff development and technical assistance by cross-disciplinary teams to cross-disciplinary groups, using both Title I and IDEA dollars
- Developing accountability plans that are cross-disciplinary
- Utilizing numerous strategies for communication across programs within state departments of education
- Setting up a cohesive and comprehensive school assistance program
- Blending staff when providing services to students (i.e., co-teaching and using the "incidental benefits" enabling language in IDEA '97 to serve general education or "other program" students with IDEA funds)
- Avoiding labeling children whenever possible and focusing instead on helping all students learn and meet school and district goals
- Involving parents early and comprehensively whenever anything new is being planned
- Creating a template by SDEs to assist districts in making cross-program plans
- Arranging to provide tray liners to fast food companies listing some test questions that will be asked on state assessments
- Joint monitoring of program compliance by SDE staff
- Using blended or combined funds to perform certain functions
- Providing districts the option of submitting combined applications for Title I and IDEA funds (and eventually requiring this).
- SDE designating district liaisons responsible for providing assistance in all areas to districts
- Developing of a single district plan, which the SDE can monitor as a whole, and
- Involving a broad cross section of stakeholder groups

Barriers to Collaboration and Potential Strategies

While recognizing that there are benefits of collaboration, and successful strategies that can be used to further it, the three state teams also recognized that barriers must be considered and overcome if collaboration is to become a growing reality. The principal barriers identified and ways suggested to overcome them were:

Barrier	Strategy to Overcome	Responsibility to implement
• Fear of moving out of one's comfort zone	• Training	• School Districts • State Department of Education • U.S. Department of Education
• Inflexible funding streams	• Increase flexibility	• Legislatures • U.S. Department of Education • Congress
• Inadequate communication at all levels	• Clearer guidance materials • Meetings like this one • Cross-program conferences	• State Department of Education • U.S. Department of Education • School Districts
• Lack of knowledge across programs	• Communication • Cross-program staff development	• State Department of Education • School Districts
• Negativism from advocacy groups	• Involve them early and regularly • Create marketing strategies	• State Department of Education • School Districts
• Fear of losing identity and of job loss	• Training	• State Department of Education • School Districts
• Assessment and accountability can be a barrier or a support	• Appropriate accountability systems	• U.S. Department of Education • State Department of Education • School Districts
• Forgetting to keep the focus on students	• Keep parents in the loop • Communication	• Everyone
• Teacher workload	• Streamline IEPs • Increase Funding • Free up teachers to teach • Inclusion	• Legislatures • Local Boards • Administrators
• Lack of alignment between federal mandates and federal reporting requirements	• Identify problem areas and work to realign them	• U.S. Department of Education • Congress • Lobbying groups

Synthesis of the Three State Meeting

Considerable optimism was expressed during the closing debrief session of the three-state meeting. Participants appreciated the opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states and were energized by the collective knowledge. They learned successful strategies and realized that they do not have to reinvent the wheel but can adapt successful strategies for their own situations. They appreciated the openness with which states shared successes and challenges. At the same time, they developed a deeper understanding of the complexity of collaboration and of the very important role of SDEs in furthering collaboration. Participants recognized the need for technical assistance that brings people together and develops broader knowledge and deeper understanding across programs. Parents on the state teams came to see the vital role that they can play in fostering collaboration to benefit all students. Participants reported that, in spite of the challenges, they felt a sense of optimism about collaboration: it can lead to improved learning for all students and can become a reality in their states.

Eight State Consultation

On the second day of the peer consultation meeting, Illinois, Louisiana, and Wyoming were joined by five states that had participated in the earlier peer consultations on collaboration. Teams came from Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Utah and Washington, with most, but not all, team members having participated in earlier consultations. The tone for this component of the consultation was set during the opening dinner from remarks by Joseph F. Johnson, Director of Compensatory Education Programs at USDE, and Patricia Guard, Acting Director of the Office of Special Education Programs at USDE. Their support for collaboration between the two programs inspired the work of the following day and a half. In particular, their emphasis on the importance of focusing on results for both programs set the direction for the remaining discussions.

The primary focus of the next day was on hearing from the returning states about their successes and experiences since they participated in a peer match collaboration in Fall 2000. Brief summaries of their reports can be found below.

State Reports: Washington, Michigan, Kansas, Kansas, and Utah

Washington

The Washington team reported that they left the last peer match with the sense that there is a very clear need for collaboration. They had also heard support and encouragement from federal representatives that gave them confidence to move forward. This included the development of a "Dear Colleague" letter from the USDE describing opportunities for Title I and IDEA collaboration.[2] They initially thought that they wanted to set up pilot districts in which funds would be blended to maximize resources, the effort would be school-wide, and the focus would be on students. They decided that in order to do this, the SDE should "get its act together" by developing clear and consistent guidance from the state. As they tackled this task, it became apparent that there would be problems from SDE fiscal staff, and getting SDE program heads together would be a major challenge. But, through persistence and commitment, they produced a guidance document in six months, and shared it with districts soon after. They learned during this process that planning together, with a common focus on students, is extremely valuable in itself. They also learned the importance of good communication, particularly between program and fiscal staff. With the guidance document in hand, they selected a pilot district and have begun to implement collaboration at the local level.

Washington's guidance document has been presented at three national conferences and has been received with enthusiasm at each. The draft document is available on the CCSSO web site.[3]

Michigan

The Michigan team reports that it has established pilot projects in six schools, with support from some grant funding. The initiative is data-driven and invests heavily in teacher professional development. It is

[2] See Dear Colleague letter at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Policy/1q2001pl Dearcolleague112200lschoolwide.1Q2001.pdf

[3] Please see http://www.ccsso.org/pdfs/bulletin.pdf.

embedded within the school improvement process. Assessment data are gathered, analyzed, and then used to improve instruction as well as to plan personnel development that will improve student performance in all content areas.

The majority of the grant dollars allocated to the pilot sites are devoted to professional development for teachers. All teachers learn to use the same strategies and become comfortable learning from each other. There is a focus on developing teaching skills that help special education students be successful in a general education classroom as well as enabling them to access the general education curriculum in all education settings.

The pilot schools' strategies involve a significant amount of co-teaching. Funding and thoughtful scheduling enable staff to spend time planning together. Another important strategy is split-funding of ancillary staff, using both IDEA and Title I funds, to enable these program staff to work with all students. The Michigan team was proud to report that their initial data indicates that the pilot schools are building systems to support a sustained increase in student achievement.

The Michigan Department of Education is currently working to combine IDEA Part C (for services to children ages 0 - 2) and Part B (for services for children ages 3 - 21) monitoring efforts. A next step may be to begin exploring the possibility of joint special education/Title I monitoring in the future, based on: (1) what is learned through the IDEA Part C/Part B collaborative work, and (2) discussion between the lead personnel for special education and Title I regarding potential advantages and concerns.

Kansas

The Kansas team reported taking a number of steps toward collaboration. One of the first steps was communication from the SDE to school districts encouraging collaboration. A brochure that included the "Dear Colleague" letter (see footnote 2) was sent to each district. In the brochures, the Kansas Department of Education made some suggestions regarding practical strategies that school and districts can use.

Kansas described several other promising strategies. A series of meetings with stakeholders at local and state levels were held to both gather and share information and ideas . The SDE is also reorganizing to create cross-disciplinary teams of four individuals who will work with schools as a unit. Integrated reviews are another important goal for the SDE. The Kansas presenters shared two documents that have been created to support this process: an Integrity Review utilized by the Kansas State Department of Education to monitor local districts and an Integrated Review that serves as an self-assessment for schools preparing for state monitoring.

Small steps have been taken toward collaborative professional development. There have been cross-program panel presentations at state conferences and the summer Leadership Conference has included Special Education and Title I staff. Some pilot collaborative models are being initiated

Kansas has found that state laws that require special education funded personnel to teach only special education eligible students have been barriers to successful collaboration. The SDE attempted to get these laws changed in the last legislative session and will continue their efforts in the next session.

Kentucky

The Kentucky team reports that its efforts at fostering collaboration have been made primarily through its use consolidated planning. Each school and each district develops a consolidated plan that describes "what we want to do" and "how we will fund it." The plan creates a vision and an academic focus, leads to deliberate project design, includes meaningful parental involvement, and holds all teachers accountable for all students. A local district member of Kentucky's team commented that developing the consolidated plan "lets us talk about students, not programs." She sees collaboration as both necessary and time-saving. Kentucky emphasized that collaboration can be done successfully in both school-wide and targeted assistance Title I schools. As an example, one team member described how Title I teachers are co-teaching general education, Title I, and special education eligible students in the same classroom of a targeted-assistance site.

Kentucky believes that implementation of collaboration at district and school levels entails a considerable amount of professional development. Their vision of professional development includes both professional and paraprofessional staff and a commitment to train general education, special education, and Title I staff together frequently.

Other elements of Kentucky's plans for collaboration include the provision of summer programs' use of blended funds to support joint professional development and the use of a financial tracking tool that enables pooled program dollars to be accounted for separately at the end of each year.

At the state level, collaboration is enhanced by the fact that the state accountability system makes everyone responsible for student outcomes. In addition, the SDE is moving toward a consolidated monitoring plan. The Kentucky team reported learning that it was a challenge to get staff of the various programs to meet and plan together. But, once this began to happen, the benefits of doing so became readily apparent.

Utah

The Utah team re-emphasized a message heard from other states – that moving program people within the SDE out of their silos and into a mode of communicating, thinking and planning together is an essential step toward fostering collaboration at the state level. They, too, found that getting the fiscal staff within SDE on board with the concept of collaboration was a big challenge.

In district level work, the SDE has focused its attention on schools designated as "needing improvement." In professional development for these schools, trainers have emphasized that "all students" really means "all students." They emphasize that if the district or school is to move out of the needing improvement category, then no group of students can be left out and all staff must feel responsible for all students. The SDE has moved to a cross-program technical assistance team that works with districts as a unit in addition to working with schools. Lastly, Utah has instituted a communication plan that uses a monthly newsletter to carry messages that link general and special education.

Shared Successes, Continuing Challenges: A First Look

Following the presentations by states, the larger group broke into three smaller groups, with one new state in each group, to dig deeper into the reports from the returning states. A debrief from these sessions found that several key ideas emerged. It was clear that professional development is a key vehicle for furthering collaboration. Several people noted that opportunities to use the re-training necessitated by the re-authorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) can be used to discuss and promote collaborative practices and policies. A second commonly heard theme was the importance of using multiple communication strategies. Other themes that resonated with participants were

- Utilizing consolidated plans and monitoring as vehicles to promote collaboration
- Encouraging states, districts, and schools to embed collaboration in their IDEA and Title I plans
- Employing the concept of collaboration within an overall school improvement process
- Encouraging fiscal and program staff to communicate and learn from each other. Fiscal staff should be involved in the development of new plans and in professional development. While this may be difficult, it is better to tackle and overcome problems early in the process rather than encountering them midstream
- Utilizing data as a continuous feedback loop and maintaining a focus on accountability
- Identifying differentiated instruction in the classroom, which will probably require staff development and opportunities for teachers to learn from their colleagues
- Involving parents early and often. It is essential that they come to see collaboration as an opportunity for their children rather than a lessening of services to them
- Creating student assistance teams comprised of staff from several programs as well as general education as an important piece of a school's strategy, and
- Focusing on the needs of students as the foundation for building collaboration.

The Federal Perspective

Representatives from OSEP and Compensatory Education were asked to share their actions in furthering collaboration since the last meeting in Fall 2000. In response, they mentioned a number of significant actions. In January 2001, a "Dear Colleague" letter that encouraged and supported Title I and IDEA collaboration was sent by the U.S. Department of Education to each state director of special education. This document, signed by representatives of both OSEP and Compensatory Education, came from an idea developed in one of the earlier peer consultations and was cited as being very helpful by several of the states. USDE staff from Compensatory Education reported taking steps in the monitoring arena as well. A draft USDE monitoring guide for Title I has been modified to increase its focus on student achievement. Monitoring, using a student achievement focus, has begun in one pilot district with a second to come on-line soon. In closing their report, the federal representatives noted the significance of maintaining collaboration as a departmental priority through a change of administrations. Participants, most of whom are familiar with the changes that come with a change of administration at the state level, recognized that maintaining this focus was no small feat.

The states responded by suggesting actions that OSEP and Compensatory Education could take that would, in their view, make a significant impact on furthering collaboration. They suggested:

- Preparing and distributing an updated "Dear Colleague" letter
- Continuing and expanding student achievement-focused monitoring
- Identifying sites that are models of collaborative practice and disseminating information about them to broad audiences
- Including a report on the work of this Title I and IDEA Collaboration Network at the July OSEP Leadership Conference
- Working toward uniform definitions across programs (e.g., of what "graduation" means)
- Developing a cross-program data dictionary
- Including members of the Negotiated Rule-making Committee for Title I on the same committee for IDEA.

Many individuals commented on the value of the opportunity to have this kind of dialogue with representatives from OSEP, Compensatory Education and the Inspector General's Office, and expressed appreciation for the openness and willingness to listen exhibited by the federal representatives.

Federally-Funded Resources to Support Collaboration

A representative of the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, Wayne Ball, shared a draft side-by-side analysis comparing and contrasting Title I and Special Education. This document grew out of an idea developed in one of the previous peer consultations. Feedback on this draft was requested. The next draft will incorporate suggestions from this group of states and updated information based on the newly authorized ESEA. Participants were asked not to share the document since it was in draft form and had not been vetted. The states will receive final copies of the report when it has been revised and vetted by OSEP and Compensatory Education.

It was noted that the National Center for Educational Outcomes has also prepared a cross walk between the two programs that focuses on accountability. This document can be obtained from the NCEO website.[4]

Distinguishing Between Real and Perceived Barriers

During the pre-consultation conference call, state team members suggested that it would be productive to look back at last year's perceived challenges and barriers and to reflect on them in the light of their experiences since then. This proved to be a productive activity.

Five primary barriers had been identified in the previous consultations. One was that the funding streams for IDEA and Title I are separate and that blending these two funds might engender audits. The states decided that, in retrospect, this is more a perceived problem than a real one. They believe that this is too often used as a smokescreen to hide a fear of losing funds. States have found ways to blend funds successfully and legally.

The second barrier mentioned was the amount of paper work required by special education. The states now believe that this, too, is more a perceived barrier than a real one. It, too, is often used as an excuse to resist change. Several individuals stated their beliefs that collaboration can actually lessen paperwork downstream and duplicative paperwork. They did note, however, that collaboration does take time for activities such as

meetings, communication, and professional development. This expenditure of time, they believe, is a cost-effective investment.

The third barrier identified, lack of knowledge across programs, is a real barrier, if it is allowed to exist unchallenged. Overcoming it must be a priority for those wishing to further collaboration. Lack of knowledge can be overcome by structuring a variety of opportunities for learning such as cross training, joint professional development, and joint planning.

Any discussion of collaboration brings mention of a fourth barrier, the silos that have been created within USDE, SDEs, districts, and even schools. The participants in Shared Successes, Continuing Challenges believe that the silo mentality can be overcome with thoughtful planning and strong leadership. Maintaining a focus on students, creating cross-program teams within SDE, opening up communication, and using student achievement-focused monitoring, as well as other successful strategies described throughout this peer match, will all contribute to breaking down the silos.

The final barrier that still seems most real and difficult to overcome is that of fear, on the part of parents, students, and staff. This fear emerges from a concern that collaboration will lead to a loss of services for some populations. Multiple and on-going strategies will be needed to overcome this fear. Trust must be built over time. Listening and respecting individuals' fears is often the first step. Helping all stakeholders understand the services that will be available in a cooperatively functioning school is important. Use of accountability systems that document results by sub-groups can allay fears (or pinpoint problems that must be remedied).

Focusing on Results and Accountability

The focus of the last day was on results and accountability. A representative from the Program Evaluation unit of OSEP, Patricia Gonzalez, opened the discussion with a well-received presentation on results-focused evaluation. She posited that when people see data demonstrating that students are benefiting from collaborative approaches, they will be more open to accepting and even leading change. She urged participants who are implementing models of collaboration to collect data on both what the model did (outputs) and the results (outcomes) that followed. She suggested that 10 percent of the budget for any program should be dedicated to evaluation that focuses on student results. She urged SDEs to be involved in evaluating local models and to let schools and districts know about the kinds of data that are needed to demonstrate effectiveness. Data, especially data on changes in student achievement, should be used to shape a model so that problems can be identified early on and modifications made.

Discussion following this presentation focused on the challenges and opportunities for collaboration created by high stakes accountability. This discussion synthesized the ideas and concerns expressed throughout this match about the advantages, as well as the challenges, of using high-stakes accountability systems. Participants summarized the advantages of high stakes accountability in terms of furthering collaboration by stating that an appropriate accountability system should promote everyone rallying around a common goal

[4] Please see http://www.coled.umn.edu/nceo/OnlinePubs/Crosswalk.htm.

and lead to a common understanding of the goal. It should also cause individuals to think in new ways and to plan comprehensively with a focus on student results rather than on funding streams. Participants also found that an appropriate accountability system would likely:

- Promote use of a common language
- Help to reduce confusion and misunderstanding through common methods of data collection
- Promote higher expectations for all students
- Further inclusion of students with disabilities into general education
- Lead to more appropriate instruction for students with disabilities
- Further inclusion of all children in the accountability system, and
- Enhance shared responsibility and ownership for learning of all students

Next Steps

The peer consultation closed with consideration of next steps. Participants stated their desire to continue the work of furthering collaboration as a loosely connected Network. They suggested that an Advisory Panel of Network members be created to advise CCSSO and PMP on on-going strategies. They wanted to stay connected through regular conference calls on specific collaboration-related topics. Topics suggested for the first calls included accountability and assessment, monitoring, and building links between finance and program staff. They also wanted to maintain contact through additional face-to-face meetings of the Network, with additional states gradually being added. (A caveat to this suggestion was that the peer-to-peer approach becomes less effective as groups become larger.) A number of other strategies were also suggested. Among them were:

- Developing marketing tools
- Continuing to seek opportunities for presentations on collaboration at national conferences, along with developing a larger cadre of people who can make these presentations
- Creating a work group to consider how the evaluation logic model presented during this conference can be applied to Title I and IDEA collaboration efforts and the work of the Network
- Developing technical assistance tools and sharing them with Network members
- Seeking ways to foster collaboration between Title I and Special Education parent and advocacy groups
- Using the Regional Resource Centers and the Comprehensive Centers as vehicles for promoting sharing of ideas within regions
- Identifying areas of special expertise among Network members so that they could be involved in technical assistance and presentations to special interest groups

Everyone present expressed the hope that this meeting was not an end but a middle step in a work in progress.

The meeting closed with appreciation to CCSSO and PMP for their efforts to assist states to further collaboration and to the federal representatives for their willingness to engage in these dialogues.

Appendix

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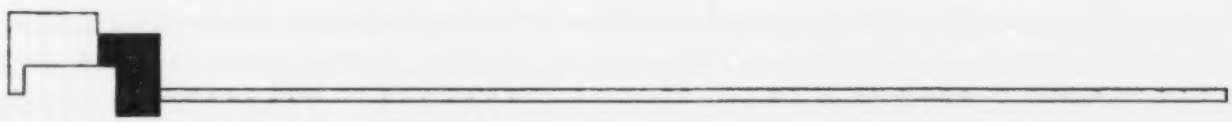

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